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ABSTRACT

The North Carolina Early Childhood Initiative, better known as Smart Start, was implemented to ensure that all North Carolina children enter school healthy and prepared to succeed. In 1997, an evaluation team worked with four Smart Start partnerships to describe the current client information systems used by local partnerships and to determine the feasibility of creating a client information system. The client information system consists of a database used by all Smart Start-funded projects. It collects similar information from participants of all Smart Start projects across the state, using a unique identifier to link data across projects. The four partnerships attempted to gather the same basic client information from projects over a 4-month period. Among the findings: none of the partnerships could gather client information for all of their projects; partnerships did not have the staff or the technical expertise and support to continue working on the client information system; and some staff and client families expressed concern about providing personal information. As result of the findings, several state- and local-level recommendations were made, including that a client information system be broader than just Smart Start, and that Social Security numbers not be used as the unique identifiers in a client information system. (SD)

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This report was written by Kelly Maxwell, Kathleen Bernier, Donna Bryant, and Betsy Lowman. We appreciate the collaboration of the Executive Directors from the four participating partnerships and the people who helped collect information for this project.

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SMART START CLIENT INFORMATION SYSTEM

FEASIBILITY STUDY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SEPTEMBER 1998

Study Purpose and Description

Some Smart Start local- and state-level leaders have expressed an interest in creating a system to count uniquely all children and families served by Smart Start. This system, referred to in this report as a client information system, would consist of a database used by all Smart Start funded projects that contains basic demographic information about each person served, including a unique identifier assigned to each individual. Using the unique identifier, data from each project could be combined with every other project to determine an accurate count of people served. In 1997, the FPG-UNC Smart Start Evaluation Team worked with four Smart Start partnerships to describe the current client information systems used by local partnerships and to determine the feasibility of collecting similar information from participants of all Smart Start projects, using a unique identifier to link data across projects.

Findings

- None of the partnerships were able to gather client information from all projects.
- Several factors, such as trust in the local partnership, seemed to support project willingness to collect client information.
- Collecting client information was time consuming.
- Smart Start projects were not able to collect information from all of the individuals served.
- Some project staff and Smart Start families expressed concerns about providing social security numbers and income level to their local partnership.
- Partnerships did not have the staff needed to continue working on the client information system.
- Partnerships did not have the technical expertise and ongoing support to continue working on the client information system.

State-Level Recommendations

- A client information system would be useful for the broader North Carolina service system, not just for Smart Start services to young children and their families.
- Cooperation and support across multiple key organizations would be needed before a client information system could be implemented across all partnerships.
- A client information system should not be implemented without the financial resources to support it.

Local-Level Recommendations

- Social security numbers should not be used as the unique identifier in a client information system.
- Projects could collect client information more easily during enrollment periods.
- Partnerships may find it useful to delineate in contracts with funded projects their expectations about data collection for the client information system.
- Partnerships should develop guidelines for gathering client information from unique projects.
- Local partnerships would need at least one knowledgeable, full-time staff member to coordinate a client information system.
- Partnerships may find it more feasible right now to gather long-term information from a sample of children, rather than implementing a client information system for all children.

SMART START CLIENT INFORMATION SYSTEM FEASIBILITY STUDY

The North Carolina Early Childhood Initiative, better known as Smart Start, is a partnership between state government, local leaders, service providers, and families to better serve young children. The main goal of Smart Start is to ensure that all children enter school healthy and prepared to succeed. Smart Start's innovative approach requires local community partnerships to plan how best to meet their own community's needs, improve and expand existing programs for children and families, and design and implement new programs. In 1993, 12 Smart Start partnerships were selected from geographically and economically diverse areas across the state to begin planning and implementing programs. New partnerships have been funded each year since 1993. Currently, 55 of the 100 counties in NC are serving young children and their families through Smart Start. Each local partnership funds multiple projects that can be categorized into three general areas of services: child care quality, availability, accessibility, and affordability; health; and family support. On average, partnerships fund approximately 20 different projects each year (ranging from 10 to over 50 projects per partnership).

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Since Smart Start was implemented in 1993, legislators and others have asked the deceptively simple question, "How many children and families are being served through Smart Start?" Although an estimated number has been provided, the only way

to know the answer definitively is to document exactly who receives each type of Smart Start service. As noted in the *1994-95 Smart Start Evaluation Annual Report*, this exact documentation of people served through Smart Start is difficult for several reasons. First, many service agencies and programs in North Carolina do not count individual families and children served but instead count service contacts (e.g., number of clinic visits) which overestimate the actual number of people served. Second, some Smart Start activities are outreach efforts, such as public education through pamphlets, for which lists of families reached cannot be produced. Third, agencies and programs serving children and families in North Carolina do not share a common database of client information. Thus, people who receive multiple Smart Start services are counted by every different agency or program in which they participate, overestimating the total number of people served by Smart Start.

Over the years, some Smart Start local- and state-level leaders have expressed an interest in creating a system to count uniquely all children and families served and to evaluate the relationship between service intensity and outcomes (e.g., Do people who receive more intensive Smart Start services have better outcomes than people who receive less intensive or no Smart Start services?). This system, referred to in this report as a client information system, would be a database used by all Smart Start funded projects that contains basic demographic information (e.g., date of birth) about each person served by Smart Start. The database would contain the same information collected in the same way from all projects to ensure that each project's information could be combined with every other project's information. To combine data from different projects, each person served must be identified uniquely. A person's social

security number is an example of a unique identifier that could be used in this system. With a unique identifier, it is possible to determine which people received services from only one project or from multiple projects.

Some local partnership leaders have taken the first step in developing a client information system by gathering similar client information from multiple Smart Start sponsored programs. In 1997, the FPG-UNC Smart Start Evaluation Team investigated the feasibility of using a similar database across multiple partnerships to answer more accurately the basic question, "How many children are served through Smart Start?" The two major purposes of the investigation were to:

- describe the systems used by local partnerships to count children who have received Smart Start services, and
- evaluate the feasibility of collecting information on all Smart Start children through a common database system.

DESCRIPTION OF PARTNERSHIPS' CLIENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS

This study included four partnerships that had gathered information from clients across multiple Smart Start projects. Three of these partnerships (referred to in this report as Partnerships A, B, and C) began participating in Smart Start in 1993. The fourth (Partnership D) became a Smart Start partnership in 1994. In the winter of 1996, we asked each partnership Executive Director and other relevant staff to describe their client information system. Each participating partnership's system prior to the 1997 feasibility study is described below.

Partnership A's Client Information System

A partnership board committee designed a common client information data sheet in 1995 as one step toward organizing the partnership's financial and performance accountability. This data sheet included information about the age of the client and his/her immediate family members. Information about both children and adults was collected. A unique identifier for each family member was created using the person's first three letters of the last name, the first letter of first name, and date of birth. The social security number of the oldest preschool child was used as a common family identifier to link people to families (e.g., to identify siblings who received services).

From July to December of 1995, about half of the Smart Start projects gathered these data in paper form. The other half of the projects that did not collect the requested information were administered by one agency whose leaders did not want to participate because they did not see a clear purpose in the effort, believed that they could not obtain the information from the numerous families they served, and did not want to add to staff's workload. The partnership staff did not enter the paper forms from each project into a database or summarize the information in a meaningful way. Knowing that half of the projects would not participate, the partnership did not ask any projects to participate again in a client information system until the 1997 feasibility study.

Partnership B's Client Information System

In 1994, Partnership B implemented a client information system to help make program decisions and provide a more accurate count of people served through Smart Start. The committee wanted to use the information to ensure that family support

programs were serving their intended clients and to determine whether some populations were not being served. The partnership designed the system to be used for family support programs only, and did not collect the information for children receiving Smart Start child care or health services. The family support client information system included: the date services began, ethnicity of target child, family income, family size, single parent household status, primary caregiver's education level, number of children under 6 with special needs, number of children under 6 who did not speak English, and the social security number for each child in the family who was less than 6 years old. This client information was collected on a form by family support project staff and sent quarterly to a partnership staff member who entered the information into a computer database. Each participating project received a quarterly summary report of their data. Almost all family support projects have continued to participate to some degree in this system.

Partnership C's Client Information System

A Partnership C staff member developed a client information system in 1994 as a step toward providing a more accurate count of the people served through Smart Start. Information was collected for children served by Smart Start and professionals who received Smart Start sponsored training (e.g., child care providers, nurses). The data sheet for children included the following information: the date services began, target child's social security number, first three letters of child's last name, child's date of birth, child's ethnicity, family size, family income, single parent household status, primary caregiver's education level, number of children in the family who were less than 6 years old, number of children under 6 with special needs, number of children under 6 who did

not speak English, and the number of children under 6 who attended child care. The data sheet for professionals included the following: social security number, ethnicity, name of employing agency, highest education level, and number of children under 6 served by the professional.

During the 1994 fiscal year, almost all Smart Start projects in this partnership collected the requested client information for children and professionals. In 1995, far fewer projects (only 12%) collected the requested information, possibly because the data collected in 1994 were not summarized in a meaningful way. Until the 1997 feasibility study, the partnership did not request client information again from projects.

Partnership D's Client Information System

Partnership D began designing a client information system during their first year of planning to provide an accurate count of the people served through Smart Start, to help develop coordination among community services, and to create a procedure for following children over time (which could help them evaluate the long-term child outcomes of Smart Start projects). They implemented a client information system during 1995, their first year of funding service delivery projects. Each Smart Start funded project was responsible for gathering the name, date of birth, and social security number for each child under 6 served. Each project could collect additional information, such as attendance or pre- and post- intervention measures. Approximately 75% of Smart Start projects collected the client information, which was reported to the local partnership, summarized by partnership staff, and reported monthly to the partnership board. Partnership D has continued using this client information system.

PROCEDURES

For this study, the four partnerships agreed to try gathering the same basic client information from funded projects over a 4-month trial period. The FPG-UNC Smart Start Evaluation Team provided technical assistance and some financial support for a person at each site to help collect this information and document the a) process used to collect the information, b) problems and solutions, c) time spent on the task, and d) response rates when possible. The basic client information included:

- Child's name
- Child's social security number
- Child's date of birth
- Child's sex
- Household income
- Household size
- Mother's name
- Mother's social security number

Partnerships requested each child's social security number as the unique identifier to link each child across multiple Smart Start funded projects. Each child's name, date of birth, and sex were requested to provide information that could be used to link children in case the social security number was not provided. Household income and household size were gathered to determine a family's poverty status. The mother's name and social security number were requested as a way of linking children to their

families. More detailed information about this client information system and sample data collection forms are provided in the appendix.

Each partnership handled data collection slightly differently, although they all hired someone to help gather data for the client information system. Because child care centers served many children and required a special effort to collect the data, three of the four partnerships focused their data collection efforts primarily on child care centers. Partnerships anticipated difficulty in obtaining information from child care centers because, unlike agencies, center staff do not have extended, routine contact with parents during which the information could be collected. Although parents come to child care centers daily, they typically are rushing either to pick up or drop off children on the way to or from work. Because of the expected difficulty in obtaining information from parents of children enrolled in child care centers, partnerships and the FPG-UNC Smart Start Evaluation Team were interested especially in determining the feasibility of gathering information from child care centers.

Staff in Partnerships A and B worked primarily with child care centers to collect client information data but also facilitated data collection from other programs (e.g., obtained administrative support for project staff to gather data and designed a data collection form for project staff). Staff in Partnership C worked with child care centers only. Staff in Partnership D worked with all projects to modify their existing data collection form and coordinate data collection.

FINDINGS

None of the partnerships were able to gather client information from all projects.

Partnerships excluded some projects from their client information database because it was not feasible to gather information from participants (e.g., outreach projects, library projects). Other projects were excluded because program staff expressed concerns regarding confidentiality (e.g., adult literacy projects, women's shelters, and immigrant support service programs). Another group of projects was excluded because project administrators were reluctant to participate (e.g., large agencies that had hundreds of clients receiving Smart Start funded services).

Several factors seemed to support project willingness to collect client information.

In this database effort, participation among Smart Start projects varied widely from partnership to partnership. Projects were more likely to collect client information if they had a trusting relationship with the local partnership and other Smart Start funded projects collecting client information data. Projects were also more likely to participate if they understood the importance of collecting the information, knew how the information was to be used, and knew about the client information system requirements when they were first awarded a Smart Start contract.

Collecting client information was time consuming.

For some projects, staff could collect the required client information easily because it was already collected through their routine procedures; other projects required more effort. In one partnership, staff spent approximately 44 hours collecting

client information from parents of 372 children attending nine child care centers, averaging 7 minutes per form. (This does not include the time spent by child care directors distributing and gathering the forms or by families completing the forms.) Partnership staff spent those 44 hours explaining the system to child care directors, preparing parental consent forms, developing and posting reminder notices on classroom doors, traveling to the centers to collect completed forms, and talking with parents during pick-up hours at the centers.

In another partnership, staff from Smart Start funded projects (not including child care centers) estimated their time spent collecting client information for Smart Start. Although there was a wide range of time required, project staff reported spending an average of 5 minutes per form. Because Smart Start is serving a large number of children and families in each community, the time needed to gather this information on all Smart Start participants would be large (e.g., using the 5 minutes per form guideline, it would take 83 hours to gather information from 1000 individuals).

Smart Start projects were not able to collect information from all of their clients.

Two partnerships documented client response rates. Using estimates from project staff, response rates in one partnership varied from 20% to 100% across participating projects. That is, even when projects tried to obtain and report standard client data, not all families were willing to give it. In another partnership, client response rates were gathered from nine child care centers. For these centers, response rates ranged from 18% to 70% after one attempt to gather the information and ranged from 18% to 90% after two attempts. These data suggest that a client information system will never include information on *all* Smart Start participants. 15

Some project staff and Smart Start families expressed concerns about providing social security numbers and income level to their local partnership.

As mentioned earlier in this report, the client information system used social security numbers as the unique identifier linking children who participated in multiple Smart Start projects. Without a unique identifier of some type, partnerships cannot match children across projects to determine whether someone received services from more than one Smart Start project and, therefore, cannot provide an accurate count of the total number of people served.

Some project staff in all four partnerships raised concerns about including social security numbers in a client information system. Some families also expressed concerns about including social security numbers and income. One parent said, "*This form is asking a lot about social security numbers and income. Isn't it a little much? I think they're basing everything on income and I don't agree with that. I don't want to be a part of it.*" Another parent said, "*I suggest that (partnership name) study the quality of services provided with Smart Start money rather than the parents' income and social security numbers of the persons served.*"

This hesitancy to include social security numbers is evident in the number of forms that were missing social security numbers. In one partnership that had widespread cooperation across projects, 29% of clients did not provide social security numbers. In another partnership, 25% of the parents returning forms to child care centers did not provide social security numbers.

Partnerships did not have the staff needed to continue working on the client information system.

Although most partnerships asked project staff to gather client information, someone at the partnership had to enter the information into a computer program, summarize the data, and write a report. During this trial period, partnership staff already had multiple responsibilities and could not add to their current workload. In all cases, someone outside the partnership was contracted to work on the client information system during this trial period. At the end of the period, three of the four partnerships had not identified someone to continue the work. Partnerships already have an enormous administrative responsibility, and adding the oversight of a client information system to their current workload does not seem reasonable without substantial additional resources.

Partnerships did not have the technical expertise and ongoing support to continue working on the client information system.

Three of the four partnerships did not have staff who knew computer database programs well enough to continue using the client information system database and generate summary information from the database.

STATE-LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS

Three general recommendations about a client information system are directed at state-level leaders.

A client information system would be useful for the broader North Carolina service system, not just for Smart Start services to young children and their families.

A client information system shared across all services would be helpful not only to count accurately the number of people served but also to evaluate the effectiveness of the broad range of services provided to children and adults in North Carolina. With such a broad implementation of a client information system, we could better understand the relationships between intensity of services and outcomes (e.g., length of employment, school success). A client information system would also inform us about the patterns of services people use, which could help create a more coordinated system of services. For example, if most people who use the Health Department also use services within the Department of Social Services, then administrators could decide to locate those services in the same building or develop just one enrollment process for both programs.

Cooperation and support across multiple key organizations would be needed before a client information system could be implemented across all partnerships.

Many people would need to agree on the importance of developing a client information system and working collaboratively to implement such a system. At a minimum, agreement would be needed from the legislature, NC Department of Health

and Human Services, NC Partnership for Children, each local partnership board, state- and local-leaders of major agencies like the Department of Social Services, as well as private organizations such as the United Way that receive Smart Start funding.

A client information system should not be implemented without the financial resources to support it.

Creating, implementing, and supporting a client information system would be expensive. Each local partnership would need one to two more full-time administrative staff members, and the NC Partnership for Children (or other support organization) would need many new staff to provide ongoing technological support. Specialized computer software and upgraded computer systems also might be needed.

LOCAL-LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS

Six recommendations are provided for local partnerships who are using or want to use a client information system.

Social security numbers should not be used as the unique identifier in a client information system.

Section 7 of the Federal Privacy Act of 1974 requires all agencies that ask for social security account numbers to tell the person a) whether the disclosure is mandatory or voluntary (if mandatory, the agency must also provide the statute or authority that requires it) and b) how the information will be used. The individual must be asked permission *each* time an agency wants to use the social security number for a new reason. For example, if an agency first asked to collect social security numbers for their own record keeping, they would need to ask the individual again for permission to

use the social security number for Smart Start. Not asking for permission each time is a federal offense and could happen easily if a staff member is unaware of the law and has access to clients' social security numbers. Violation of the law is a felony punishable by a fine of up to $5000 and/or up to five years in prison. The severity of the violation poses a substantial risk that many agencies may not want their employees to bear.

The Electronic Privacy Information Center recommends alternatives to using social security numbers as a unique identifier. One simple option is to use only the last four digits of the social security number. It is also possible to purchase software to create a unique identifier based on a person's full name, date of birth, and address. Information about these and other unique identifier options is available at The Electronic Privacy Information Center website at http://www.epic.org/privacy/ssn/alternatives.html.

Projects could collect client information more easily during enrollment periods.

Partnerships that are implementing a client information system would obtain data more easily—and possibly from more clients—if they coordinated data collection with each project's enrollment period. This seems to be especially important for child care centers because it is very time consuming to gather information from parents once they complete the enrollment forms.

Partnerships may find it useful to delineate in contracts with funded projects their expectations about data collection for the client information system.

Partnerships could increase project participation in the client information system by requiring funded projects to ask clients for information. It is important to note that a partnership could mandate through a contract a *project's* participation in the client information system, but it could not mandate the participation of individual *clients*: the

partnership cannot force individuals to provide the requested information but it could require project staff to ask individuals for the information. Although Partnership D used this strategy (along with others) successfully, it should not be the *only* strategy used to garner support for and participation in the system. As mentioned earlier, developing trust among community programs and the partnership and using the information wisely also facilitate project involvement.

Partnerships should develop guidelines for gathering client information from unique projects.

Collecting client information is not always a simple process. For example, if a child care center receives computers for each classroom, the computers will benefit children from that year and future years. Which children have received this Smart Start benefit and how should they be counted? A partnership may want to count children from multiple years as clients for that project. As another example, partnerships should develop guidelines for determining which children benefit from child care provider training. A more elaborate data collection system than the one used in this trial would be necessary to link child care providers to the children they teach. These are just two examples of the numerous difficult decisions partnerships face if they implement a client information system.

Local partnerships would need at least one knowledgeable, full-time staff member to coordinate a client information system.

It is important for partnerships to have at least one staff member to coordinate data collection, organize the data in a computer database, and provide summary reports of the client information data. Larger partnerships may need additional staff. The

partnership staff's role is critical to ensure that the data are used appropriately, once collected. Data that sit in a file drawer in someone's office are not helping programs or partnerships. People who work with the client information system must have a strong knowledge of computer databases, be good logical thinkers and problem-solvers, and have good interpersonal skills.

Partnerships may find it more feasible right now to gather long-term information from a sample of children, rather than implementing a client information system for all children.

It is important to document the effects of Smart Start on children's outcomes. Although a client information system provides one way of identifying children who received one or many Smart Start services, it is not the only way. A smaller group of children who received intensive Smart Start services could be identified and followed to determine their outcomes. For example, partnerships could select children who participated in child care centers that received intensive Smart Start services and compare these children's developmental skills to children who participated in child care centers that were not intensively involved with Smart Start. As another example, partnerships could survey participants of particular programs, such as Family Resource Centers, to gather information about program satisfaction and family outcomes.

APPENDIX

Client Information System Description

Sample Data Collection Forms

Client Information System Description

Information to Gather from All Smart Start Programs

- Child's name[a]
- Child's social security number[a]
- Child's date of birth[a]
- Child's sex[a]
- Household income (in categories listed below)
- Household size
- Mother's name[b]
- Mother's social security number[b]

[a] For programs that primarily serve parents, rather than children (e.g., literacy programs), obtain the above information for all children under 6 years. You may want to consider developing a form that has places for the child-related information to be obtained on up to 5 children, instead of having a family complete a separate form for each of their young children.

[b] Information about mothers will be used to link children with families.

Income Categories:

$0 - 4,999
$5,000 - 9,999
$10,000 - 12,499
$12,500 - 14,999
$15,000 - 17,499
$17,500 - 19,999
$20,000 - 22,499
$22,500 - 24,999
$25,000 - 27,499
$27,500 - 29,999
$30,000 - 34,499
$35,000 and above

County Partnership for Children
Family Data Sheet

The following information is to help the County Partnership for Children collect data about families receiving Smart Start services to examine its effectiveness. This information will be used to determine the number of families served by Smart Start and the type of services each family receives.

This information will **not** change the services you receive now or in the future. It will only be shared with the County Partnership for Children and the Smart Start evaluation team.

( ) I give my permission for the data to be used by the County Partnership for Children.

( ) I do **not** want the County Partnership for Children to receive any information about my child and my family. I understand that this will not affect my Smart Start services now or in the future.

_____ _____
Parent/Guardian's Signature Date

_____
Child's name

****

FAMILY SIZE (Indicate the number of people who live in this household)

TWO _____
THREE _____
FOUR _____
FIVE _____
SIX _____
SEVEN _____
EIGHT or more__

ANNUAL GROSS INCOME (Indicate the range of annual gross income -before taxes and including AFDC- for the family)

$0-10,000 _____
$10,001-20,000 _____
$20,001-30,000 _____
$30,001-40,000 _____
$40,001-50,000 _____
$50,001+ _____

Is this a single parent household? Yes _____; No _____
Mother's name _____ SSN _____
Who is the primary caregiver? Check one.
Mother:___ Father:___ Grandparent:___ Teen Mom: ___Teen Dad:___ Other:___
Circle the highest education level of the mother:
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 GED 13 14 15 16 17+
Please provide the social security number for each child (age 0-5)
Child's name _____ SSN _____
Date of birth _____ Male _____ Female _____
month day year
Child's name _____ SSN _____
Date of birth _____ Male _____ Female _____
month day year
Child's name _____ SSN _____
Date of birth _____ Male _____ Female _____
month day year
List names and SSN of additional children (ages 0-5) on back.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Dear Smart Start Family,

The Partnership for Children is gathering information about families receiving Smart Start services. This information will be used to determine the number of families being served by Smart Start and to determine the number of services each family receives. This information will **not** change the services you receive now or in the future. This information will be shared only with staff at the Partnership for Children and the Smart Start evaluation team. We would like for you to provide as much of this information as possible.

CHILD'S BIRTHDATE **CHILD'S GENDER**
CHILD'S SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER _____ - ____ - _____
CHILD'S NAME
MOTHER'S NAME
MOTHER'S SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER _____ - ____ - _____
MOTHER'S EDUCATIONAL LEVEL
FAMILY SIZE
CHILD'S RACE/ETHNICITY (circle one) African-American Asian White Multi-Racial Hispanic Middle-Eastern Other (specify) _____
FAMILY INCOME (circle one) $0 - 4,999 $5,000 - 12,499 $12,500 - 14,999 $15,000 - 17,499 $17,500 - 19,999 $20,000 - 22,499 $22,500 - 24,999 $25,000 - 27,499 $27,500 - 29,999 $30,000 - 34,499 $34,500 and above
To Be Filled Out By Project:
_____ Transportation _____ Transportation

____ I give my permission to share the above information with the Partnership for Children.

____ I do not want to share the above information with the Partnership for Children. I understand that this decision will not affect my Smart Start services now or in the future.

_____ _____

Parent's Signature Date

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REPORTS FROM THE UNC SMART START EVALUATION TEAM
Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center at University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill

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Emerging Themes and Lessons Learned: The First Year of Smart Start (August 1994)
This report describes the first-year planning process of the pioneer partnerships and makes some recommendations for improving the process.

Smart Start Evaluation Plan (September 1994)
This report describes our comprehensive evaluation plan at the onset of the evaluation, designed to capture the breadth of programs implemented across the Smart Start partnerships and the extent of possible changes that might result from Smart Start efforts.

Keeping the Vision in Front of You: Results from Smart Start Key Participant Interviews (May 1995)
This report documents the process as pioneer partnerships completed their planning year and moved into implementation.

North Carolina's Smart Start Initiative: 1994-95 Annual Evaluation Report (June 1995)
This report summarizes the evaluation findings to date from both quantitative and qualitative data sources.

Reinventing Government? Perspectives on the Smart Start Implementation Process (November 1995)
This report documents pioneer partnership members' perspectives on 2 major process goals of Smart Start: non-bureaucratic decision making and broad-based participation.

Center-based Child Care in the Pioneer Smart Start Partnerships of North Carolina (May 1996)
This brief report summarizes the key findings from the 1994-95 data on child care quality.

Effects of Smart Start on Young Children with Disabilities and their Families (December 1996)
This report summarizes a study of the impact of Smart Start on children with disabilities.

Bringing the Community into the Process: Issues and Promising Practices for Involving Parents and Business in Local Smart Start Partnerships (April 1997)
This report describes findings from interviews and case studies about the involvement of parents and business leaders in the Smart Start decision-making process.

The Effects of Smart Start on the Quality of Child Care (April 1997)
This report presents the results of a 2-year study of the quality of child care in the 12 pioneer partnerships.

North Carolina's Smart Start Initiative: 1996-97 Annual Evaluation Report (April 1997)
This report summarizes evaluation findings related to each of the four major Smart Start goals.

Kindergartners' Skills in Smart Start Counties in 1995: A Baseline From Which to Measure Change (July 1997)
This report presents baseline findings of kindergartners' skills in the 43 Smart Start counties.

Child Care in the Pioneer Partnerships 1994 and 1996 (December 1997)
This report presents more detailed information about child care centers that were included in *The Effects of Smart Start on the Quality of Child Care (April 1997)*.

Families & the North Carolina Smart Start Initiative (December 1997)
This report presents findings from family interviews of families who participated in Smart Start in the pioneer counties. The interviews included questions about child care, health services, family activities with children, and community services and involvement.

The Effects of Smart Start Child Care on Kindergarten Entry Skills (June 1998)
This report presents results from kindergartners who attended Smart-Start-funded child care centers compared to a random group of kindergartners who attended a broad range of child care or no child care.

Effect of a Smart Start Playground Improvement Grant on Child Care Playground Hazards (August 1998)
This report presents results from a comparison of the playground safety of child care playgrounds in a county that used Smart Start funds for playground improvement compared to a non-Smart Start county.

Smart Start and Local Inter-Organizational Collaboration (August 1998)
This report presents data about the effectiveness of the Smart Start initiative on improving collaborative relationships. Qualitative and quantitative data were obtained from 269 respondents in 10 local Partnerships.

To obtain copies of these reports, please call Marie Butts at (919) 966-4295, or Email her at Marie_Butts@unc.edu

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